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Abstract: The Cheetah Conservation Fund has recently expanded its efforts in Kenya. Under the direction of Mary Wykstra, the Kenya project uses CCF Namibia and other successful cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) programs as models to develop a conservation strategy, which supports the long-term survival of cheetahs in Kenya. Volunteers are a vital component of CCF programs. Volunteers work alongside CCF staff, contributing their expertise and time. CCF has had a long history with zoological institutions and we are eager to develop volunteer opportunities with zoo professionals. Utilizing zookeepers' skills and abilities as well their passion for conservation, will be an important addition to our conservation.

Volunteer Opportunities Available in Kenya

About Cheetah Conservation Fund-Kenya

The Cheetah Conservation Fund has recently expanded its efforts in Kenya. Under the direction of Mary Wykstra, the Kenya project uses CCF Namibia and other successful cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) programs as models to develop a conservation strategy, which supports the long-term survival of cheetahs in Kenya.

Informal observations have shown that in the last 15 years wildlife has been reduced dramatically within Kenya. However, little is known about the status of cheetah on Kenyan farmlands, as most of the research in this country has been limited to protected areas and game parks. Past data estimates cheetah numbers in Kenya at fewer than 1000. Conflicts with man and habitat loss appear to be the biggest threat facing cheetahs living outside protected areas. The Kenya project is working with the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) and collaborating with other researchers and conservationists to determine cheetah numbers and sustainable habitat sites in Kenya.

CCFK is currently conducting a nationwide census, collaborating with KWS, East African Wildlife Society (EAWS) and other NGOs. The project aims are multiple: determine an estimated population status of cheetah; evaluate the conflict issues between farmers and cheetah; and determine suitable cheetah habitat within farmlands/community ranches. Information gathered from the census will be used to make informed decisions on cheetah conservation and wildlife conservation practices. Positive relationships built with CCFK and the people of Kenya will help facilitate conservation measures.

Education programs are a major component to the conservation work in Kenya, addressing predator/human conflict issues. They are concentrated in areas of cheetah sightings and reported livestock losses. While meeting with farmers to discuss livestock management practices, CCFK works to instill a new appreciation for the cheetah in farmers and school groups. This is done through classroom presentations and distribution of education materials.

Cheetah education is not always conducted through formal programs. The *Snap-a-Cheetah* project (developed to verify landowner/farmer interview census data and contribute to a picture database)



Kenyan farmers learn to use a single-use camera to document cheetah sightings and livestock damage.

also creates another education opportunity with farmers. Single-use cameras are being distributed to farmers throughout Kenya. They are asked to take pictures of any cheetahs they see, as well as any livestock damage that may have occurred. They may also take a few personal pictures for them to keep. The cameras generate interest within the community. The farmer becomes a “cheetah educator”, explaining why he has the camera, about the cheetah census and why cheetahs are important to their community.

Human/predator conflict escalates as human populations rise and cheetah habitat is lost. CCFK works with

major landowners and wildlife forums (a coalition of private landowners within a district) to find alternative livestock and agricultural management practices that promote healthy predator co-

existence. Recently CCFK has begun to closely monitor some individual cheetahs living within a densely populated area that been in conflict with farmers, who have reported livestock losses. A tagging program has been initiated, telemetry collars have been placed on cheetahs in the southeastern part of the Machakos Wildlife Forum in southeast Kenya. CCFK and landowners are using this situation to better understand cheetah movements through farm and ranch land and to observe their behavior closely.

Accurate census counts are difficult with cheetah because they are elusive predators and hard to see. Leopards and other spotted cats are often identified as cheetahs. An evaluation of cheetah habitat is also essential. Understanding cheetah movements, demographics, and relationships with prey and humans will help accurately estimate the current status of cheetah in Kenya. Focusing on the interdependency of predators and prey with humans, CCFK seeks ways to ensure sustainable populations of cheetah to secure their long-term survival in Kenya.

Under the direction of Mary Wykstra, CCFK work is done with Kenyan employees Cosmas Wambua (Research Assistant) and Lamumba Matiso (Machakos Community Liaison Officer), in addition to the contribution of volunteers. In 2005 CCFK will be expanding efforts with the help of additional volunteers.

About the Volunteer Program

Volunteers are a vital component of CCF programs. Volunteers work alongside CCF staff, contributing their expertise and time. CCF has had a long history with zoological institutions and we are eager to develop volunteer opportunities with zoo professionals. Utilizing zookeepers' skills and abilities as well their passion for conservation, will be an important addition to our conservation.

CCFK operations are based on the Soysambu ranch of the Delamere Estates. The farm is located approximately 2 1/2 hours northeast of Nairobi near Lake Nakuru National Park. Living quarters are comfortable, yet rustic. There is running water and generator-supplied electricity. However, because much of the work of CCFK is conducted in the field, time may be very limited at the ranch, and volunteers frequently find themselves staying in a tent.

Each volunteer experience is unique as CCFK work is varied. The itinerary is flexible to allow changes in the schedule to accommodate needs of partner organizations and landowners as well as to respond to cheetah inquiries. The following describes some of the work volunteers can anticipate:

Field Work-

- Tracking cheetahs - This work includes lots of walking through thick brush. When cheetahs are sighted be prepared to wait, observe and follow.
- Interviews with landowners (frequently in remote regions of Kenya) to determine cheetah presence, other predator sightings, game/ecosystem viability to sustain predators, and livestock conflict. Often the interviews are conducted with pastoral ranchers or small farm owners. Distribution of education materials and one-use cameras occurs as well. You may be asked to assist with collecting the data from the interviews and distributing the materials.

6 March 2005 - Sample Field Notes

Today we left Nakuru and drove to the Magadi region via Nairobi. We drove through many small towns and over some very bumpy roads. We drove over rolling hills and then down into the Great Rift Valley. Mary had warned us it would be warm, but I did not anticipate the lack of movement in the air and the dry dust that would make me feel as though I had been placed in a desiccant to be preserved. We continued on traveling further south, reaching very close to the Tanzania border. The houses became fewer in number and the distances between villages became greater. People were grazing their cattle and goats in the bright colored garb of the Massai, it is a beautiful contrast to the desert sand. Zebra, giraffe and antelope rested under the acacia trees taking a break from the mid-day sun. We have come to this area to conduct interviews with a group of Massai community ranch owners. We reached our destination, Shampole, after five hours of driving, to meet the man who will be our escort in the area for the next week. Yusuf was very excited to see us and show us the area he and his family have called home for many generations. He hopped in the truck and we

drove further in the bush to find a spot to set up camp that night. Because dusk was nearing, we needed to find a place soon. He led us to a spot near a group of manyatas (a traditional Massai dwelling made of sticks and mud surrounded by acacia branches). We are introduced along the way to many community members; most do not speak English or Swahili but speak Maa, the language of the Massai. As we set up camp, Yusof tells us that in the morning we will move our camp further in the bush. Scorpions scurry by, as we scramble to change out of our sandals and into shoes. We are fortunate to spend the night here, as the Massai are private people and do not often welcome visitors so close to their homes. We will fall asleep tonight to the sounds of the singing and dancing of the Maasai Moran, warriors who live in the bush. Tomorrow we will look for the cheetah.

- Game and livestock counts are conducted in the areas where interviews are done. You will be asked to identify the number of animals seen, how far away (in meters), species, and determine sex of animals if possible. It is recommended that you become familiar with the antelope, predator and large bird species before you come to Kenya.
- Vegetation density assays taken to determine the amount of vegetation in an area and if the area is suitable for cheetahs and prey species.

At the Farm-

- Computer work such as data entry, generating reports. It is recommended that you are familiar with computers and word processing software.
- Everyone staying at the farm (and in the field) is expected to take turns preparing dinner. You can anticipate foods similar to the US.
- Living area clean-up, field trip prep and gear repair.

Education Programs

- Assist CCF staff with conducting school programs to educate children about cheetahs, including distributing materials and organizing activities.

Tourist Lectures

- Assist staff in giving presentations to tourists in the area, selling crafts, and answering questions about cheetahs.

Volunteers are asked to participate for a minimum of four weeks. This gives the volunteer time to adjust to the time change as well as familiarize them with living in Kenya and CCFK work. Participation fees are US\$300 per week. This fee covers food, housing, operating costs and a donation to the project. Travel to and from Kenya is the responsibility of the volunteer.

This is a great opportunity for animal care professionals to see and experience conservation issues that affect their charges. Volunteers will meet and get to know people living in conflict with cheetahs and better understand the complexity of these issues. In addition to observing wildlife in their wild habitat, volunteers will have the ability to contribute to first-hand in conserving cheetahs.



A CCF Volunteer records data as a cheetah is examined in preparation for tagging.

For more information about volunteering or receive an application contact:
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